

Amendments to the Drawings

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to Figs. 1, 3 and 4. These sheets replace the original sheets of drawings.

Attachment: Replacement sheets

Remarks

By this amendment, the specification, drawings and claims 1-3, 7-11, 14, 15, 17 and 18 are amended, claims 4, 5 and 20-31 are cancelled, and new claims 32-51 are added. After entry of this amendment, claims 1-3, 6-19 and 32-51 will be pending. Reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

As indicated above, these remarks have been revised to address the March 23, 2006, Notice alleging that the December 21, 2005, Amendment is non-responsive.

Claims 4, 5 and 20-31 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer to expedite prosecution and/or for economic reasons. Applicants reserve all right to pursue these or similar claims in a continuation application.

Applicants appreciate the indication that claims 4-19 and 23-28 are directed to allowable subject matter.

Claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of allowable claims 4 and 5 and reworded for improved readability. Thus, claim 1 and its dependent claims should be allowable. Specifically, claim 1 is amended to recite that the projecting element comprises "an end portion of a media transfer line" (see allowable claim 4) "or an end portion of an electrical contact" (see allowable claim 5). Further, amended claim 1 recites that the projecting element is "positioned to engage a surface of an opening in said locking element to move said locking element between lock and unlocked positions when said first and second coupling fittings are moved toward and away from each other."

Claim 4 recites "wherein said projecting element comprises an end portion of a media transfer line and said mating surface of said locking plate comprises a surface of an opening in said locking plate." Claim 5 recites "wherein said projecting element comprises an end portion of an electrical contact and said mating surface of said locking plate comprises a surface of an opening in said locking plate." Therefore, claim 1 as amended and discussed above defines substantially the same scope as the combination of allowable claims 4 and 5.

As indicated in the December 21, 2005, Amendment, claim 1 and the other claims in this application have been revised to refer to a "locking element" instead of a "locking plate" because to the extent that "plate" may define a specific geometry, such geometry is not required for the locking function or the patentability of the claims. Support for the amendment can be found in the application at, e.g., page 5, line 6, which states "[a] locking element, or plate 7...."

Because claim 1 as amended includes all of the features of allowable claim 4 and allowable claim 5 and the change from "plate" to "element" does not implicate the allowability of this subject matter, claim 1 and its dependent claims are believed to be allowable.

In the Office action, claims 1-3, 20-22, and 29-31 are rejected under §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 2,552,543 to Earle. Claims 1-3, 20-22, and 29-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,143,347 to Lee. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

As indicated, claim 1 is believed to be allowable because it incorporates the allowable features identified in allowable claims 4 and 5. In any case, neither of the applied prior art references, whether considered singly or in combination, teach or even suggest at least the claim feature of "the projecting element comprising an end portion of a media transfer line or an end portion of an electrical contact and being positioned to engage a surface of an opening in said locking element."

Claims 20-22 and 29-31 have been cancelled, so the rejections are moot with respect to these claims. Dependent claims 2 and 3 are allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 1, as well as for the respective additional features recited therein. Accordingly, the prior art rejections should be withdrawn.

Applicants filed an Information Disclosure Statement concurrently with the December 21, 2005, Amendment identifying the same references in the Information Disclosure Statement filed December 11, 2003. English-language abstracts of the foreign language references were submitted with the December 21, 2005, Information Disclosure Statement. Since the references were previously identified in the December 11, 2003, Information Disclosure Statement, it is believed that there should be no additional charge for providing the abstracts. Accordingly, Applicants therefore request a refund of the \$180 Information Disclosure Statement fee.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's careful review of the application. The specification is amended such that the abstract complies with all requirements and changes are shown. Fig. 1 is amended to switch the reference numerals for the axes 1A and 3A. Specification references to these axes have been revised as necessary. In Fig. 3, the leader line for the reference numeral 15 is revised.

A new reference numeral 30 has been added to the specification and drawings to designate the portion of the motor. Applicants respectfully submit that the term "motor sleeve"

as used in the specification is acceptable as it relates to a sleeve associated with a motor for the handpiece. The specification is revised to provide literal antecedent basis for "projecting element" and "bearing member," although such amendments would not appear to be required.

Dependent claims 7 and 8 and allowable claim 14 have been amended to recite that when the ring member is in the "unlock position," it is out of urging engagement with the bearing member. This amendment to the claims emphasizes that there may be contact between the ring member and the bearing member in the unlock position, but that the ring member does not urge the bearing member in the unlock position.

The claims have been revised to correct minor antecedent basis errors and to address the objections in the Office action. Claim 1 has been amended to include indentations. Claim 17 is amended to recite that "wherein said groove is formed on an inner surface of said outer sleeve and said bearing member is shifted by the ring member radially outwardly towards its lock position when the first and second coupling fittings are joined such that at least a portion of the bearing member occupies the groove." No new matter is added.

New claim 35 is directed to a plug connection for fast-fit coupling of two appliances forming part of a medical handpiece system. The system comprises a first coupling fitting on one of the appliances and a second coupling fitting on the other of the appliances. The first coupling fitting has a moveable locking element thereon and comprises a bearing member mounted for shifting between an unlocked position and a lock position spaced radially from the unlocked position. The second coupling fitting comprises a projecting element thereon projecting toward the first coupling fitting and positioned to engage and move the locking element between lock and unlock positions when the first and second coupling fittings are moved toward and away from each other.

Applicants respectfully submit that neither of the applied references appears to teach or even disclose the subject matter claimed in claim 35. Accordingly, claim 35 and its dependent claims are believed to be allowable.

Based on the foregoing, Applicants submit that the pending claims are directed to allowable subject matter and that the application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner believe that anything further is required to place the application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants representative by telephone.

Respectfully submitted,

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